



AUGUSTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

12 Gedney Street
Augusta, Maine 04330-9105
Phone - 207-626-2468 Fax - 207-626-2444
www.augustaschools.org

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Superintendent

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Director of Special Education

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at Large

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at Large

March 28, 2008

REC'D MAR 28 2008

Commissioner Susan A. Gendron
Department of Education
23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0023

Dear Commissioner Gendron:

Pursuant to the correspondence we received regarding the Augusta School Department's submission of an Alternative Plan, I submit to you the following:

- An updated Submittal Sheet.
- An updated Cover Sheet Checklist.
- A copy of the Commissioner's Response dated December 14, 2007.
- Additional Data.

Additional Data Required:

Pursuant to page two of your response to us, "Each alternative plan must provide projected expenditures in FY 2008-2009 for system administration, transportation, special education, and facilities and maintenance in accordance with P.L. 2007, chapter 240, Part XXXX-36(6)(F)."

The Augusta School Department is still in the process of developing its Budget for school year 2008-2009. The Augusta School Board voted at their March 26th meeting to proceed with a recommendation to the Augusta City Council, as required by Charter, to submit a Budget of \$28,144,684 for school year 2008-2009.

If approved by the City Council, the recommended Budget is \$375,000 less than for school year 2007-2008 and reduces the need from taxation by approximately \$125,000.

Commissioner Susan A. Gendron
Department of Education
Augusta, ME
March 28, 2008
Page Two

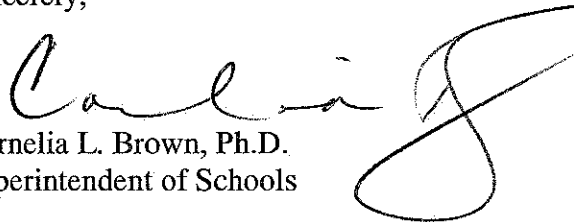
Contained in the 2008-2009 Operating Budget are the four categories targeted by legislation for reduction. The Budgets for each of those four categories are as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Facilities and Maintenance: | \$2,451,630 |
| 2. Special Education: | \$3,850,473 |
| 3. System Administration: | \$633,108 |
| 4. Transportation: | \$954,615 |

Staff reductions in each of the aforementioned categories, with the exception of Transportation where routes have been altered, make up the majority of the decreases.

If the Department of Education would like additional information, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cornelia', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Cornelia L. Brown, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

CLB/gih
Attachments

ALTERNATIVE PLAN SUBMITTAL SHEET

School Administrative Unit Submitting Alternative Plan:

- Augusta School Department

Contact Information:

Name: Cornelia L. Brown, Superintendent

Address: 12 Gedney Street

Augusta, ME

04330

Telephone: 207-626-2468

email: cbrown@augustaschools.org

Date Plan Submitted by SAU: 03/28/08

The intent to submit an alternative plan has been approved by the Commissioner in the approval of the Notice of Intent?

☐ YES

☒ NO

(If NO, please explain.)

On September 13, 2007, Commissioner Gendron responded to the Notice of Intent filed by the Augusta School Department and stated that she had reviewed Augusta's intended actions as described in its Notice of Intent and that she has "determined that it does not comply with the requirements of the Reorganization Law" because: "1) The proposed Regional School Unit does not meet the minimum residence student enrollment of at least 2,500"; and "2) The Notice of Intent was filed without a complete financial analysis."

The Commissioner said that there was an opportunity for continued discussion and collaboration and that the Department will convene a meeting with Representatives from MSAD #11, Union #133, and Union #131 to explore reorganization possibilities.

The Augusta School Department respectfully submits that the Commissioner's letter did not require the Augusta School Department to file a Reorganization Plan and that it does qualify to file an Alternative Plan. The Commissioner's letter is silent on the 1,200 Student Special Circumstances Exception and the Donut Hole Exception. In the opinion of Brann & Isaacson, Counsel for the Augusta School Department, the Augusta Notice of Intent complied with the Reorganization Law requirements.

Alternative Plan Cover Sheet

(Please attach Alternative Plan as Exhibit A)

Plan Requirements				
Item	Complete	In Progress	Not Yet Started	Need Assistance ¹
Plan addresses how the SAU will reorganize administrative functions, duties and noninstructional personnel so that projected expenditures of RSU in fiscal 2008-2009 for the following areas will not have an adverse impact on the instructional program.				
system administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
special education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
facilities and maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan addresses how cost savings will be achieved in fiscal 2008-2009 for the above four areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parameters for Plan Development				
Enrollment meets requirements (2,500 except where circumstances justify an exception)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When viewed in conjunction with surrounding proposed units, may not result in one or more municipalities being denied the option to join an RSU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Includes at least one publicly supported high school	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consistent with policies set forth in section 1451	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No displacement of teachers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No displacement of students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No closures of schools existing or operating during school year immediately preceding reorganization, except as permitted under section 1512	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborative Agreements				
			Yes	No
Does your plan currently include information/documentation on collaborative agreements? <i>(not required, but encouraged)</i>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

¹ Please explain what assistance you need to complete this portion of your plan, and state from whom you need assistance, on the next page.

Actual number of students for which the SAU is fiscally responsible: 2,386

Actual number of students for which the SAU is fiscally responsible: 2,386

Exception	Exception Claimed in Plan	Documentation Provided? (Please attach as Exhibit B)	
		Yes	No
Geography	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demographics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Population Density	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Unique Circumstances	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Assistance Needs –

Please use this section to describe your needs for assistance and from whom you need assistance.

[illegible]



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0023

DEC 19 2007

JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

SUSAN A. GENDRON
COMMISSIONER

December 14, 2007

Cornelia L. Brown, Superintendent
Augusta School Department
12 Gedney Street
Augusta, ME 04330

Dear Superintendent Brown:

Thank you for the Alternative Plan that you submitted on behalf of Augusta School Department on December 3, 2007 for Department review for compliance with the school reorganization law, P.L. 2007, chapter 240, Part XXXX.

I recognize how much time, effort and thoughtful work is required to complete an alternative plan and appreciate the efforts made, to date, by all those involved.

Members of my staff and I have reviewed the submission and offer the comments and notes listed below to assist you in completing the plan. If you make any substantive change(s) to any part of the plan beyond those listed below, please be sure to note those on the Updated Alternative Plan Cover Sheet Checklist, along with notation of those items that have changed per the notes contained in this response.

General Documentation (Submittal Sheet)

- All information submitted as required.
- The actual number of students for which the proposed RSU was fiscally responsible as of October 1, 2006 was 2,361. I am making you aware of this as this is the enrollment number that will be used in determining Essential Programs and Services funding.

Checklist/Plan Text Items

Items Checked "In Progress" or "Not Yet Started"

With respect to the items you checked as “in progress” or “not yet started”, we are unable to complete our review until the additional information is provided. However, based on our preliminary review we would ask you to please note the following:

** Required Items*

Each alternative plan must provide projected expenditures in FY 2008-2009 for system administration, transportation, special education, and facilities and maintenance in accordance with P.L. 2007, chapter 240, Part XXXX-36(6)(F).

Please provide these projected expenditures; and please consider using the guidance offered in the Drummond Woodsum workshop materials.

In Exhibit A, we have included a comparison of (A) the 2007-08 EPS allocations for the four categories of system administration, transportation, special education, and facilities and maintenance and (B) your unit’s 2007-08 budget information (if available) for these four categories. Also included are estimated 2008-09 EPS allocations for system administration, transportation, and facilities and maintenance. I encourage you to review this information. NOTE: If the 2007-08 budget information is missing then it is likely that your unit has not submitted this information to the MEDMS Financial System; please see Administrative Letter # 20, dated 2/13/2007 for instructions.

Please address the requirement in P.L. 2007, chapter 240, Part XXXX-36(6)(F) that “. . . the projected expenditures in FY 2008-2009 for system administration, transportation, special education, and facilities and maintenance will not have an adverse impact on the instructional program” by providing an assurance to that effect. Note: We will confirm this assurance against the information that was required to be submitted to the MEDMS Financial System in August, 2007.

A model for budgeting for system administration is available at www.maine.gov/education/supportingschools/planning.html.

The Department of Education will be issuing an RFP to procure routing software to be available statewide. It is the Department’s intent to issue the RFP early in 2008 and have a contract signed with a vendor as soon thereafter as possible so that the software will be available to RSUs and municipalities as soon as possible. SAUs may begin to work with the system in FY 2008-2009 but will not be able to budget any cost savings until FY 2009-2010.

We will review all items on the checklist again, upon your completion of the plan.

** Parameters*

D. Please continue work on this section.

Needs for Assistance

The Department's Reorganization Management Team will be contacting you shortly to discuss how best to address the needs for assistance you identified.

SUBMISSION OF REVISIONS:

Please provide the additional materials to complete your plan by February 1, 2008. Please include:

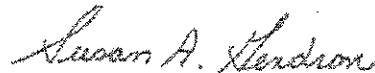
- Any additional data required
- An updated Submittal Page
- An updated Cover Sheet Checklist
- A copy of this Response from the Commissioner.

I will respond no more than 14 days after the revisions/additional materials are refiled with the Department. As you are the contact person identified on the Submittal Sheet, this response is addressed to you but with the understanding that you will share it with your school administrative unit board members.

Finally, what I am reviewing for approval is a plan (or a submission, if the plan is incomplete) which is by its very nature prospective, with steps yet to be taken or finalized; and any review comments or approval given are in relation to the elements required under P.L. 2007, chapter 240, Part XXXX but not the legality of all the activities proposed. Thus, I strongly recommend that you have your own legal advisor(s) review the details of any particular transaction proposed in your plan (particularly with respect to the disposition of property, to debt, and to employee contracts/relations) as you proceed, to ensure the legality of the steps you'll be taking to implement the plan. If that review leads to any substantive changes in any parts of your plan, please be sure to submit an amended plan to the Department for our review and our file.

Again, my sincere thanks for your efforts.

Sincerely,



Susan A. Gendron
Commissioner of Education

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